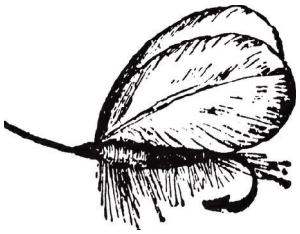
Area Rules and Regulations

- Fishing is not allowed in the hatchery raceways, or in the three outlets specified on the area map.
- Outside fish food is prohibited for fish health.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times.
  - No pets permitted inside the center, ADA service animals only.
- No hunting and trapping.
- No littering.
- No fires and fireworks.
- Camping is not permitted.
- Motorized vehicles are not permitted off-road.
- Removal of vegetation, including wildflowers, is prohibited. Nuts, berries, fruits, mushrooms, and wild greens can be collected for personal use only.

Please consult the Wildlife Code for regulations on size, species, permits, and bait restrictions on various portions of Lake Taneycomo.



This hatchery was acquired in part through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery & Conservation Education Center

Public Hours
Tuesday – Saturday 9:00a.m. to 5:00p.m.

Closed Sunday, Monday, and all state holidays. Fishing access, trails, and picnic areas are open seven days a week.

For local information, contact:
Missouri Department of Conservation
Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery
483 Hatchery Road Branson, MO 65616
(417) 334-4865 ext. 0
Hatchery video:
https://short.mdc.mo.gov/SOHvideo

Other nearby MDC Areas
Cooper Creek Access
Ruth & Paul Henning Conservation Area
Busiek State Forest & Wildlife Area
Drury-Mincy Conservation Area
Boston Ferry Conservation Area

Additional area information is posted on bulletin boards located in parking areas and area office

09/2024

03/2024 (Regulations are from the Wildlife Code of Missouri and selected statutes of the State of Missouri. Special area regulations are in Chapter 11 of the Wildlife Code. A free printed copy of the Wildlife Code, which lists most area regulations, is available from the Conservation Department. Chapter 11 in its entirety is available at www.sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/3csr/3csr.asp.) Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Missouri Department of Conservation is available to all individuals without regard to their race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Questions should be directed to the Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, (573) 751-4115 (voice) or 800-735-2966 (TTY), or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203.

Shepherd of the Hills

Fish Hatchery & Conservation Education Center

Conservation Education Center

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery (SOTH) is the largest trout-rearing facility operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Located in Branson below Table Rock Dam, it features a Conservation Education Center for public education on trout, aquatic life, and Missouri wildlife. Here visitors can explore the education center, raceway pools, trails, and fishing access.

The Hatchery

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery raises more than one million brown and rainbow trout each year. Many of these fish are released into Lake Taneycomo. The remainder are distributed to other MDC trout-managed areas and trout parks across Missouri. None of these fish are sold. Construction of the hatchery started in 1957, with trout production beginning in 1958 after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed Table Rock Dam, creating Table Rock Lake. The dam releases cold water (averaging 48 degrees F) from the bottom of Table Rock Lake into Lake Taneycomo. This creates an ideal environment for trout, however fluctuating water levels in Lake Taneycomo hinder trout reproduction.

Area Features

The hatchery grounds feature trails through various habitats, including Lake Taneycomo's shoreline and rocky bluffs. It showcases sycamore, burr oak, and wildflowers. In the spring, visitors can enjoy flowering trees including wild plum and dogwood. Habitat improvements by the Missouri Department of Conservation promote native plants and wildlife, as well as timber stand improvements and invasive species removal. The area offers excellent opportunities for observing native wildlife, such as songbirds, herons, and wintering birds of prey such as bald eagles and hawks.

SOTH Hatchery Facts

- It is the only MDC hatchery raising both rainbow and brown trout.
- Brown trout broodstock are collected from Lake Taneycomo for fall/winter spawning and returned to the lake afterwards.
- Rainbow trout broodstock are spawned in the fall and spring for a few years before being retired into the lake.
- Fertilized eggs are incubated in jars; eyes develop in two weeks, and they hatch into sac fry in a month.
- Trout are monitored and fed special commercial trout food. After a year and a half, 10–12-inch trout are ready to be stocked into Lake Taneycomo.
- Approximately 14 million gallons of water from Table Rock Lake flows through the hatchery each day.

Things To Do

Hatchery Tours- Guided hatchery tours are offered on weekdays periodically throughout the year.

Fish Feeding- Fish food is available for 25¢ from feed machines located near the hatchery raceways. Outside food is not permitted.

Education Center- Visitors will find exhibits, aquariums, reptiles, and an educational video showing how trout are raised in the hatchery.

Trails- Approximately 2.3 miles of trails showcasing a variety of Ozark landscapes.

Picnicking- A pavilion and tables are located near Lake Taneycomo. Another picnic area is located at the trailhead of the White River Bluff trail. Use is first-come-first serve.

Fishing- Fishing is allowed year-round in Lake Taneycomo. For specific rules and regulations, please refer to the Missouri Department of Conservation Fishing Regulations.